

PEOPLE & THINGS By ATTICUS

IT is a thought-provoking experience to motor through the harsh realism of the Saar Basin and put up for the night at such a pleasant nineteenth-century survival as Luxembourg. After dinner we went to the square and listened to a band concert as if nothing had happened since the 1890s. There is, however, an unsuitable charm about band music which is quite irresistible, especially if one stops refreshment at a table under the trees and thereby lulls the critical instinct.

Our last port of call before returning from our wanderings in Europe was Le Touquet, which until our last day was in the grip of an icy blast of vile weather that emptied the beach at Paris Plage but helped to fill the Casino. How Goering and his merry men must have enjoyed that pleasant haven when they occupied the place after the fall of France. True, the Casino was closed, but I imagine that as time went on Goering must have heard the cry "Rien ne va plus" on the wings of the wind.

Westminster Vacuum

I MAY not carry all my readers with me, but what a vacuum is created when Parliament goes on holiday! The grand inquest of the nation day by day keeps us informed of all that is happening even though, in the process, our nerves are strained. Incidentally there are a number of M.P.s who think that the summer recess is too long, and this year it is longer than usual.

It might be argued that Ministers need a respite, but though Prime Ministers under stress and strain have sometimes played the weary Titan, Mr. Macmillan, like Sir Winston Churchill and Mr. David Lloyd George before him, seems to engender vitality through hard, incessant work.

Mr. Macmillan's decision to emulate Puck and almost encircle the world is both admirable and characteristic. I am particularly glad that he will visit New Zealand, for the simple reason that the people of that happy country still regard Britain as home. No matter how the winds of criticism or the fog of misunderstanding afflict us, the New Zealander still thinks we are right.

Pause for Thought

I WONDER what is going through the minds of those who by their outcry forced the British and French forces

to stop short of the Suez objective? We cannot blame it all on Mr. Dulles, nor on Mr. St. Laurent nor Mr. Gaitskell.

Sir Anthony Eden is incapable of bitterness, but he would be more than human if, in his retirement, he did not feel that it was a tragedy of epic proportions when resentment and fear guided the actions and the thoughts of men in high places.

The Western world has only begun to pay the cost of those fateful hours when by its timidity and lack of unity the gates to the Middle East were opened to Russia.

Iconoclast at Edinburgh

AMONG my gramophone records is one which, if it could not be duplicated, I would not sell even for ready money. The record consists of a lecture by British-born Miss Anna Russell to an imaginary women's culture club in



MISS ANNA RUSSELL

America. In it Miss Russell explains the plot of "The Ring" by Richard Wagner. When I tell you that I played it one night for Edward Heath, the Government Chief Whip, and he nearly fell off his chair with laughter, you will realise its devastating quality.

It was a stroke of genius by the Edinburgh authorities to bring her over for this year's Festival. So overwhelming and hilarious is her performance that a prominent member of the Metropolitan Opera circulated a petition among New York music-lovers to have her performance banned from Carnegie Hall.

Miss Russell is a well-made young blonde of traditional singer's proportions, who began a perfectly normal singing career at the Royal College

of Music where she trained for five years as an opera singer and even performed serious folk songs on the Third Programme.

But the more she saw of the world of music, the more she felt the need to parody it, and despite her virtuosity on the harp, the French horn, the clarinet and the bagpipes, proceeded to take America by storm with her potted version of the Ring of the Niebelungs, as well as arias like "Smoke gets in your Tosca," and folk songs such as "Old Father Freud."

Within a few years she has become for Americans both a craze and a cult. Such an attack upon American high-browism takes courage, but then Miss Russell's father was the late Colonel Claude Russell-Brown, C.B., D.S.O., and her grandfather won the Victoria Cross in the Indian Mutiny.

The G.B.S. Will

THE Shaw will, and in particular its "Proposed British Alphabet," is back in the news. Mrs. Clara S. Richter, United States Attorney of New York, has made the journey to Britain to do all she can to support the last will and testament of G.B.S.

Judgment was given against the will by Mr. Justice Harman last February, but the Public Trustee and the Attorney-General have both given notice of appeal and the case is down for hearing next October.

Mrs. Richter is a great admirer of Shaw, and a playwright herself as well as a lawyer.

Shaw's standing in the United States and in the world of letters has never been higher, and his estate is now more valuable than even the Probate Department assessed it. Not only is "My Fair Lady" running at the rate of a small mint, but "The Apple Cart" and "Major Barbara" have been playing to full houses.

Misunderstood

MAYBE his proposal for a new "British Alphabet" will also come to be more appreciated. Certainly it has been grossly misunderstood. His proposal was not for any reform of spelling, for he expressly excluded spelling reform—and reformers. His British letters would have to be as different from any Roman letters as the Arabic numerals were from the Roman numeral letters; his alphabet would have to be forty letters to correspond exactly with the forty

phonemes used by English speakers.

If the will succeeds Shaw's "Androcles and the Lion" will be published with the two texts in parallel and a glossary; so we may yet be able to put the new alphabet and ourselves to the proof.

Blind Man's Mission

ONE of the most impressive sights in London last week was Victor Riesel, the American journalist who was blinded after an acid-throwing attack, holding court in the lounge of a Park Lane hotel. A constant stream of eminent trade unionists, journalists and Americans in London came to his table, talked and made way for more. A small, vigorous man, with a forceful way of speech, in dark glasses, he spoke with easy authority of labour problems all over the world.

Unseeing, with groping hands, he was like a symbol of modern American life; bold, terrible, but not in the least tragic. Every summer he and his wife travel abroad, mixing a holiday with the study of labour problems, with which his whole life is concerned, and about which he is almost painfully sincere. Recently he has been attracted to Asia, where he is interested in the growth of labour movements in new countries.

He has a vast respect for trade unions in Britain, as opposed to some of those in his own country, against the corruption of which he has fought until recently an almost single-handed battle. The Senate committee investigating the Teamsters Union and its notorious boss, Dave Beck, largely came about through the cruel attack on himself and through his own activity. "Unions in Great Britain," he says, "are a movement, a philosophy, and a spirit."

People and Words

In diplomacy, as in war, I try to respect the principle that you should always give your enemy a line of retreat if you can.

—PRESIDENT EISENHOWER.

The reason why there are so few women comics is that so few women can bear being laughed at.

—MISS ANNA RUSSELL.

You can criticise a man's wife his children, in fact, almost anything about him—but if you criticise his taste in art you offend him mortally.

—MR. PAUL GETTY.
Swimming the Channel is rather like a train journey to Inverness—it gives you plenty of time for peaceful thinking!
—CMDR. GERALD FORSBERG. R.N.